

Message Text

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ACTION DPW-01

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DIA WASHDC

JCRC BARBERS PT HAWAII

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 26484

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, CASC, VN

SUBJECT: DEPARTURE FROM VIET-NAM OF AMCIT ARLO GAY

REF: BANGKOK 26332

SUMMARY: ARLO GAY AMPLIFIES REASON FOR THINKING OTHER AMERICANS ARE BEING HELD IN VIET-NAM AND COMMENTS ON INTERROGATIONS AND PRISON LIFE. END SUMMARY.

1. IN FURTHER CONVERSATION WITH ARLO GAY, WHO DEPARTED VIET-NAM SEPTEMBER 21 (REFTEL), FOLLOWING INFORMATION DEVELOPED.

2. POWS. ON SUBJECT OF WHETHER OTHER AMERICANS ARE STILL BEING HELD, GAY SAID NVA CAPTAIN DUNG (FULL NAME UNKNOWN), WHOM HE SAW DURING MOST OF HIS STAY IN THE PRISON NEAR SON TAY AND WHO ACCOMPANIED HIM TO THE PLANE AT TAN SON NJUT, DENIED CONSTANTLY THAT OTHER AMERICANS WERE BEING HELD. HOW-
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EVER, DUNG WAS INTERPRETING FOR A NORTH VIETNAMESE LTC ON

APPROXIMATELY AUGUST 27, 1976, WHEN THE LATTER TOLD GAY THAT "THERE IS SOME PROBLEM WITH THE UN, WHICH IS WHY WE ARE HOLDING SOME AMERICANS." DUNG STOPPED INTERPRETING IN MID-SENTENCE, THEN FINISHED, RETURNING THE FOLLOWING DAY TO TELL GAY THAT THE LTC WAS CONFUSED, THAT NO OTHER AMERICANS WERE BEING HELD. NOTE: JCRC REPRESENTATIVE IS REPORTING THROUGH MILITARY CHANNELS SOME VERY INTERESTING INFORMATION DEVELOPED DURING OUR DEBRIEFING CONCERNING MIAS.

3. OTHER AMERICANS. WHILE IMPRISONED IN ONE OF THREE JAILS IN CAN THO, GAY HEARD ON JUNE 5, 1975, THAT A BLACK AMERICAN HAD BEEN FOUND HIDING IN CHAU DOC. WE BELIEVE THAT THE STORY WAS ACTUALLY THAT OF HERMAN MCDONALD, WHO WAS CAPTURED JUNE 1, 1975, IN NEIGHBORING AN GIANG. IN ADDITION, A PERSON BELIEVED ORIGINALLY TO BE AN AMERICAN BUT WAS ACTUALLY A FRENCHMAN WAS BRIEFLY IN CAN THO MILITARY JAIL SUMMER 1975 BEFORE APPARENTLY BEING RELEASED. MRS. GAY HEARD THAT AN AMERICAN WHOSE BODY IS COVERED WITH SCARS WAS TO HAVE LEFT SAIGON ON CANCELLED AIR FRANCE FLIGHT LAST WEEK ALONG WITH CHINESE WIFE. SHE HAS NO IDEA WHO THE COUPLE WERE.

4. CAPTURE AND INTERROGATION. BECAUSE HE WAS TAKEN PRISONER ALONG WITH THREE ARVN PROVINCIAL AND DISTRICT OFFICIALS FROM AN GIANG, COMMUNISTS BELIEVED CONSISTENTLY THAT DAY HAD MADE RENDEZ-VOUS WITH THEM AND THAT THEY WERE ALL WORKING TOGETHER. WHILE IN THE SOUTH, WHERE INTERROGATIONS WERE RELATIVELY AMATEURISH, HE COULD NEVER DISABUSE THEM OF THIS NOTION. IN THE NORTH, THINGS WERE MUCH MORE PROFESSIONAL, AND GAY BELIEVES THAT AFTER FOUR OR FIVE INTERROGATION SESSIONS, VIETNAMESE REACHED CONCLUSION THAT HE WAS PROBABLY ONLY A SIMPLE MERCHANT SEAMAN AFTER ALL. HE SAID, HOWEVER, HE BELIEVED THEY WERE HOPING HE WOULD SAY HE WAS CIA AGENT, FOR ALL THE TROUBLE THEY WENT TO FOR HIM. TIME AND AGAIN, VIETNAMESE WOULD DELVE INTO HIS LIFE STORY, WHICH HE HAD TO REPEAT INCESSANTLY, TRYING TO FIND THE GAPS AND INCONSISTENCIES.

5. PRISON LIFE: CAN THO. PRISONERS WERE SUDDENLY ALLOWED

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TO MINGLE WITH ONE ANOTHER WITHIN JAIL ON OCCASION WHICH GAY THOUGHT WAS HO CHI MINH'S BIRTHDAY BUT WHICH WAS PROBABLY SEPTEMBER 2 NATIONAL DAY. THIS RELATIVE FREEDOM WAS GOOD WHILE IT LASTED. LATER, IN THE NORTH, HIS CAPTORS EXPRESSED SHOCK THAT PRISON AUTHORITIES WOULD SIMPLY OPEN CALLS AND LET PRISONERS ROAM FREELY INSIDE PRISON FOR DAYS.

6. PRISON LIFE: NEAR SON TAY. ALTHOUGH ALWAYS UNDER GUARD,

GAY WAS IN PART OF PRISON WHERE INMATES WERE ALLOWED TO WALK OUTSIDE DURING DAY, ALTHOUGH THEY WERE NOT PERMITTED TO COMMUNICATE WITH ONE ANOTHER. THERE WAS SEPARATE SECTION OF NINE CELLS WHERE PRISONERS WERE KEPT IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT AROUND THE CLOCK, WHERE GAY STAYED FOR TEN DAYS AFTER HE RETURNED TO JAIL FOLLOWING HIS ESCAPE. GAY NEVER LEARNED HOW MANY OF THESE CELLS WERE OCCUPIED.

7. PRISON LIFE: GO VAP (VICE GIOI AP REPORTED PREVIOUSLY). ALTHOUGH UNAWARE OF NUMBER OF PRISONERS AT THIS JAIL NEAR TAN SON NHUT AIRPORT, THEY WERE DIVIDED INTO THREE GROUPS: EX-ARVN, COMMUNIST SOLDIERS IMPRISONED FOR OFFENSES COMMITTED, AND AN UNDEFINED CATEGORY INTO WHICH HE PRESUMABLY FELL. THIS JAIL WAS RUN BY SAME BODY (WHOSE NAME GAY HAD NOT HEARD OF) WITHIN SRV WHICH ADMINISTERED HIS PRISON CAMP NEAR SON TAY. BOTH GAY AND NVA CAPTAIN ESCORT DUNG WERE UPSET TO FIND SIMPLE EX-ARVN ENLISTED MAN WHO HAD BEEN IN THERE SINCE TAKEOVER. DUNG COMMENTED THAT IT HAD BEEN UNJUST TO HOLD HIM AND DETERMINED THAT HE WOULD SOON BE RELEASED.

8. COUNTRYSIDE. GAY'S ESCAPE FOR 26 DAYS IN JULY-AUGUST PROVIDED HIM A GOOD LOOK AT THE COUNTRYSIDE. HE FOUND PEOPLE UNIVERSALLY POOR, WHETHER VIETNAMESE OR ETHNIC MINORITY. AS HE MADE HIS WAY WEST OF PRISON TOWARD LAOS, HE REPORTED SEEING LARGE NUMBERS OF SOLDIERS AND EX-SOLDIERS, LATTER DISTINGUISHED BY REMOVAL OF STAR FROM CAPS. GAY BELIEVES THIS IS INDICATION THAT CONSIDERABLE DEMOBILIZATION HAS TAKEN PLACE IN THE NORTH.
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